



March 14, 2016

RB 443: An Act Concerning Notification to Victim Support Groups of the Names of Victims of Domestic Violence

Dear Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Connecticut Psychological Association (CPA) **opposes** RB 443, **An Act Concerning Notification to Victim Support Groups of the Names of Victims of Domestic Violence**. While CPA recognizes the intent to help victims of domestic violence who may have difficulty seeking out support groups or other assistance on their own, the privacy violation enabled by this bill may be much greater than any benefit received by the intended recipients, victims of domestic violence, and may also have unintended negative consequences.

Domestic violence occurs across all socioeconomic classes, as well as all racial and ethnic groups. In the mid-1990's, I served as a Legal Information Service Volunteer at a Hartford shelter for victims of domestic violence. I quickly learned domestic violence has no boundaries and is often accompanied by a great deal of shame. Some of the women came to the shelter because they felt they could not go to the police in their town. Thankfully, education and awareness has increased a great deal since that time. Some women, then and now, possibly depending upon their visibility professionally or in the community, or their husband's visibility, would prefer to seek assistance privately. They do not want this information shared with public entities or support groups, and one never knows whose neighbor or colleague is somehow connected to the support groups. This bill could likely have the unintended consequence of deterring victims from contacting the police.

We also know that change occurs when people are independently ready to make the change, and not a second before. Police officers can help educate victims about their options by providing information about available resources, such as support groups.

While this bill may be an effort to circumvent perceived barriers on the part of victims, we must take weakening of privacy rights very seriously. Privacy cannot be returned once breached. The choice of with whom to share private information should remain with the individual.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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